

TRIBUTE TO JAKE POWERS

HON. JAMES P. McGOVERN

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 20, 1997

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to revise and extend my remarks about an extraordinary member of the Worcester, MA, community, Jake Powers.

For literally decades in the city of Worcester, men and women and children of all ages have benefited from the leadership, vision, and organizational skills of Jake Powers and his special commitment to community service.

In the 1950's, Jake Powers organized a summer basketball league—which at the peak of its popularity attracted more than 12,000 fans annually. In the 1960's, Jake Powers created the Worcester Park Touch Football League which at one time had 2,500 participants each year and 5,000 spectators during the annual super bowl.

Remarkably, over a 20-plus-year period, Jake Powers' determination and common-sense strategies raised more than \$400,000 for the Mercy Center for Developmental Disabilities.

Then in the 1970's, he participated in the creation of the Stan Musial Baseball League and was the vice chairperson of the Irish Celtic Cross Memorial which is on the grounds of city hall.

Jake Powers is the acknowledged historian in Worcester of all subjects with an Irish theme.

And legend has it that this gentleman once removed a manhole cover and inserted a canoe at the basin of the Blackstone Canal. Jake Powers paddled under the streets of Worcester—for educational purposes—to study the structure of the canal which was built by Irish immigrants. Fortunately for so many of us, Jake didn't get lost on that occasion.

Jake's family includes his wonderful wife Martha and the proverbial apples of their eyes, Michael, Mary, and Kathy.

On behalf of Jake Powers' numerous students, fans, admirers, and beneficiaries of his lifetime efforts, I am inserting John Dempsey's column of May 16 from the Worcester Telegram & Gazette:

SORRY, JAKE, JUST GRIN AND BEAR IT

I'm pretty sure that Jake Powers does crack a smile now and then.

I figure he indulges in one occasionally with members of his family, or perhaps with some particularly close colleague. As for my own experience, all I can say is that I've known him for years and the closest thing to a smile I've seen on his long, lugubrious Irish face was a wry smirk.

Which isn't to say that he lacks a sense of humor. On the contrary, Powers wields a keen and waspish wit. It's as dry as a dowager's martini, and by the time you get the joke the conversation has often moved on to the next topic.

But Mr. Smiley-face, he's not.

Powers is formally known as Vincent E. Powers, professor of history at Worcester State College. But you'd have to go back even further than his last full-face grin to find anyone who actually uses his real name. The "Jake" dates back more than half a century to his boyish summer days in the outfield, when his Lincoln Street buddies named him for some now long-forgotten baseball star. It stuck, but good.

His mother always loathed the nickname, refusing to pass on messages directed to Jake Powers. Her little boy was named Vincent, if you don't mind. There was nobody in her house by the name of Jake.

Powers is a legend in Worcester. He'll hate me for saying that, firstly because he loathes the kind of facile hagiographic stuff that too often makes its way into the newspaper, and, secondly, because as a former athlete he believes that games are won by teams, not individuals.

REVERED BY STUDENTS

But his achievements are undeniable. Former students revere his ability to ground the study of history in the reality of the city around them, and he is known for guiding graduates in their careers long after they have left his classroom. Powers, along with friend Edwin Butcher Jr., has long managed the city's huge parks football program, which over the past 20 years has raised one-third of a million dollar for the Mercy Center.

Along with North High classmate John J. Conte, now Worcester district attorney, Powers built up the basketball program at Crompton Park, which in its heyday drew thousands of fans.

Most importantly, without Jake Powers there would be next to no working-class history of Worcester. He pioneered research into the Irish immigrants who came here decades before the potato blight to build canals and railways. He knows Worcester inside-out, from the days when cows grazed on the Common, through its times of glory as a surging industrial power, right down to today, as the city uncertainly edges toward a post-industrial redefinition of itself.

Anyway, Powers is 67 now, and his many friends, former students and football and baseball players figured it was time for a tribute. So they've arranged a big bash Thursday at Wachusett Country Club. "He's always been a behind-the-scenes guy," said Walter Shea. "He's always done things for others, and was never really recognized."

The organizers thought Powers wouldn't be crazy about the idea—and they were absolutely right. But they went ahead anyway.

"One committee member is in the state police," Shea said, "so we figure we'll get Jake there even if we have to have the cops detain him."

They won't have to go that far, but Powers is still ticked off by the whole affair. This week he is trying to correct final exams and put together a summer baseball schedule, and the last thing he needed was some dumb appreciation night he didn't ask for anyway.

"I'm not sure what this damn testimonial is for," he said. "I don't even know what to call it. It's not a retirement party, because I'm not retiring. It's not a wake, because I'm not dead. If you say it's for coaching, well, I had good players. If it's for teaching, I had good students. For the sports programs, I had good people around me. No one person does it all. People exist in a social network, and they depend on the ability and cooperation of all involved."

Come on, Jake, I said. You have to admit that you're this unusual blend of jock and academic.

Wrong approach.

"I don't like labels," he said. "I like sports, but I resent being categorized as a jock. And I dislike the notion that if you're an academic you're somehow effete, intellectual and nonphysical."

Jake, I said, won't you at least try to have a good time?

He chuckled. "Oh, I guess I'll be able to enjoy myself," he granted.

In his own way, of course.

"He's got that expression, 'I'm not going to crack a smile no matter what,'" said Shea.

"It'll make no difference if we use a video or a still camera for the benefit—all the photos of Jake will come out looking like still pictures."

IN RECOGNITION OF CARMEN PAPALE

HON. BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 20, 1997

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the contributions of Carmen Papale who will retire next week as manager and international vice president of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

Mr. Papale was born and raised in Baltimore and went to work in the men's clothing industry as a cutter at Haas Tailoring Co. in 1965 rising to the level of shop steward. As many Members of the House may know, Haas Tailoring is the place to order custom suits. Haas produces the finest American made custom suits and over the years has served a diverse clientele, ranging from many members of the Baltimore Ravens, to Ambassadors and members of the diplomatic corps, to Tiger Woods. Carmen Papale was part of that fine tradition.

Carmen left Haas and went to work for the Baltimore Regional Joint Board in July 1973 as an organizer and soon was promoted to business agent representing members in shops in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. He was elected vice president of the International Union, the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers. He has been reelected to this position at every national convention since 1982. In addition, Mr. Papale has served as comanager and then manager of the Baltimore Regional Joint Board since 1982 and serves as chair of the board of trustees of the Board Health and Welfare Fund, as well as a member of the board of directors of the Amalgamated Bank of New York and on the executive board of the Maryland State and D.C. AFL-CIO.

To say that Mr. Papale retires from a lifetime of commitment to the working people of this country is an understatement. Carmen has seen and participated in great changes in the conditions under which clothing workers labor. He has also fought with all his heart his industry's abandonment of the great manufacturing centers of America for cheap labor around the world.

Over the years, Carmen has offered me his good counsel on many national and local issues. We have not always agreed, but I have always tremendously valued the wisdom, knowledge, and caring for the working men and women of this Nation that his words impart. While I wish Carmen the best in a well deserved retirement, I also hope to continue benefiting from his advice for years to come.

I hope other Members of the House will join me today in thanking Carmen Papale for all his work in the labor movement of this Nation. His efforts will be missed; his shoes hard to fill.